UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

The Global *S.M.A.R.T.* Programme:

Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends

Assessment of forensic infrastructure

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Rationale of Assessment

Crucial importance of forensic laboratory as source of information

- Physical and chemical characteristics
- Purities
- Trends, patterns of manufacturing and trafficking
- law enforcement operations, regulatory authorities, criminal justice system
- Enables response to illicit manufacture, trafficking and abuse of synthetic drugs for drug control activities and governance/ evidence-based policies.

Functional forensic laboratories should be an integral part of the national drug control governance structure.

Methodology

1. Review of relevant documents (project documents, SMART workshop reports and SMART Advisory Group report)
2. Survey questionnaire to 14 forensic laboratories in 11 countries. 10 laboratories from 7 countries responded (late response: Lao PDR, no response: China, Thailand and Viet Nam)
3. Missions to Cambodia, Indonesia and Philippines

Main types of laboratories

1. **Independent Forensic Drug Laboratories**
- Established at the national level to serve all government agencies requiring analysis of narcotic drugs
- Example: Brunei Darussalam - Narcotic Laboratory, Ministry of Health

2. **Forensic National Drug Control Authority**
- Established by National drug control bodies of countries
- Example: Cambodia - Drug Laboratory, National Authority for Combating Drugs

3. **Forensic Drug Law Enforcement Laboratories**
- Established by law enforcement agencies
- Example: Myanmar - Narcotic Laboratory Yangon, Ministry of Home Affairs

Challenges- Coordination, interaction

- **Multiple labs** (Philippines 20 labs, Malaysia 11 and Indonesia 8) → drug abuse patterns and trafficking trends only valid for the local situation → no national patterns and trends.
- **Multiple law enforcement agencies** have overlapping anti-narcotic functions and own supporting drug lab → Inter-agency rivalry and jealousy → poor cooperation and challenge to pool data.
- **Limited interaction/ national drug control body-forensic laboratory**→ importance of laboratory often not understood

Recommendations

- Standardize laboratory protocols and data.
- Improve the profile of the forensic laboratory in the national drug control body (regular briefings).
- Educate law enforcement, regulatory and health agencies on the role of the forensic lab and the potential of its data.
- Establishment of inter-agency platforms to share information among law enforcement, regulatory and health clients.
- Pool available data to enable meaningful and credible analysis.
- Develop an efficient data collection mechanism.

Challenges and recommendations- Knowledge gaps

- Most drug labs have not received formal training in the forensic aspects of clandestine laboratory investigations.
- Forensic investigators are not educated on potential dangers posed by chemicals and chemical reactions in clandestine labs.

Recommendations

- Formal training (chemistry) to enhance laboratory staff skills and knowledge → early contributions to investigations of clandestine drug laboratories.
- Educate investigators on the importance of forensic chemists → enhances quality of investigations and investigators safety.

Equipment and facilities

- Varying degree (income status, degree of donor interest).
- Well-equipped (Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore- drug profiling equipment)
- In need of improvement (Myanmar-basic; Cambodia– drug analysis instruments not in working condition), 5 laboratories (non-working important equipment, inadequate funds for repair and maintenance).
- Lack of equipment and funds for lab supply and maintenance → bad performance of labs → low quality data.
- Indonesia/Philippines: no quantitative testing on drug samples, due to law imposed time restrictions on identifying drugs samples

Equipment and Facilities

Recommendations to UNODC:

- Find sustainable solutions on financing equipment, supplies and maintenance.
- Assist countries which have the pre-requisites to carry out drug characterization and impurity profiling step by step within their limited resources (e.g. profiling work on trafficking cases involving foreigners).

Laboratory Data

- Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Philippines prove only the identity of the drug seized for prosecuting drug cases.
- Philippines quantitative tests are only made to determine the actual content of pure drug to calculate the reward for drug informants.
- Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Singapore require evidence on both the identity and quantum of pure drug.
- Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Myanmar and Philippines labs have very few reference drug standards.

Laboratory Data

Recommendations to UNODC:

- UNODC should start a pilot drug profiling programme → staff training
- UNODC should assist laboratories in: (a) manufacturing secondary reference drug standards for their own use, (b) creating national databases on the physical characteristics of drugs (JICA DPDS, Jellyfish) (c) assist laboratories with no resources in collaborating with more advanced drug laboratories in the region, (d) assist countries in establishing a common codification system for MDMA and other tablets.

Communication and networking

Forensic Alert and United Nations Forensic Laboratory online clearinghouse

Examination ongoing

Conclusion

- Assistance should be tailored accordingly and goal have to be set realistically being within reach of the respective countries.
- Focus on fundamental issues faced by the labs and make the best use of available resources.
- Ensure continuous maintenance of the labs.
- Increased collaboration with labs in relatively higher income countries such as Malaysia and Singapore, which have the ability and resources for capacity building measures in low income countries.

Thank you for your attention

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More sources for information

www.unodc.org www.apaic.org